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ORAL SALTLetters to the editor

Shadows on SALT?

The Star recently published two articles which cast further dark shadows on the hopes for strategic nuclear forces arms control with the Soviet Union. They suggest that the SALT ritual as performed by this administration is more noise than substance.

If the reports that the Soviets have stockpiled some 1,000 ICBMs and that the U.S. is offering a missile production limit on the MX, in an effort to gain Soviet acceptance of its deployment, are true, then one must ask why the Soviets are unwilling to accept a similar production limitation? Perhaps, as with the issue of a guarantee of non-aggression against Taiwan, the administration, realizing that it could not obtain the reasonable basis for an agreement, decided not to ask, preferring an agreement that was one-sided to a delay in reaching any agreement.

The Soviets could certainly launch additional missiles from concealed "soft pads" just as they point out that we could launch ICBMs from the empty holes in any Multiple Protective Structures (MPS) ICBM deployment mode. Could the Soviets be attempting to pressure the United States into buying the more vulnerable aircraft mobile ICBM deployment scheme, which the Air Force has recommended not be built? Defense Secretary Brown should keep Soviet actions in mind when he makes his recommendation to the president on an MX basing option.

Now, one might also query the Soviets on the matter of destruction of "retired missiles," 1,000 of which they presently have in storage. Per-

haps they just don't have the heart to destroy one of the few things which they manufacture so well. I would tend, however, to ascribe darker motives to the Soviets — coupled with a certain bureaucratic inertia. The ICBMs in storage could be launched from concrete pads or used as reloads in current launchers. The cold-launch technique of some Soviet ICBMs — the purpose of which is to leave the launcher rela-

Although I, too, occasionally question the winability of a general nuclear war, I am reminded by facts like these that the Soviets consider fighting and winning a nuclear war as a serious business. Lenin did say, "Make war seriously, or not at all." His dictum lives with a vengeance that borders on the irrational — and yet the political consequences of Soviet nuclear superiority are as frightening as a continual buildup of nuclear forces. Gulag lives!

The reduction of uncertainty and the removal of stimulants for worst-case analysis demand both limitations on missile production and an assurance of destruction of retired missiles. The two must, however, be joined together. Otherwise, the U.S. will be at a disadvantage since the Soviets crank out ICBMs with the regularity of Detroit's new car lines.

Additionally, there must be adequate — probably meaning on-site — inspections if verification is to become something more than a political football in the hands of an unpopular president.

So, let us have production limits, destruction requirements, and thorough and untrammelled verification for both sides. But if we cannot achieve such equity, we must then courageously face the prospect of spending our precious public funds to show the Soviets that we are willing to compete and that we can achieve a politically meaningful nuclear superiority.

I hope the leaders of the USSR will accept modifications of the treaty which I believe must — and will — be made if the treaty is to be truly an arms-control agreement. I believe the American people will not stand for an unfair treaty. I urge the Soviets not to waken this "sleeping dragon" by their intransigence; if they do, we will reduce their own nuclear forces posture to a pitiable inferiority.

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